

**Twenty Things
You Can Do
To Reduce Alcohol, Other Drug
and Gang Problems
In Your Neighborhood.**

Prepared By:

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Alcohol and Drug Programs**

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FOREWORD

This manual was prepared as part of a contract with the California State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. The contract provides technical assistance, consultation and resource materials for organizations and individuals working in the field of alcohol and other drug abuse prevention. This manual is one of a series prepared through this contract. The others include:

- *Community/Public/ Private Partnerships for Safe and Affordable Drug-Free Housing*
- *Downtime: Reducing Alcohol and Other Drug Use Risk With School Age Child Care Programs*
- *Classroom Strategies to Assist Teachers in Dealing with Alcohol or Drug Exposed Children*

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INTRODUCTION

People in many neighborhoods live with an extraordinary number of problems. Violence, drug use, drug dealing, gang shootings, burglary, robberies, prostitution and speeding cars all disrupt the quality of life and make some neighborhoods dangerous places to live. Yet people in other neighborhoods have driven out gangs, have stopped drug dealing and speeding cars, have significantly reduced the number of burglaries and break-ins, and have transformed their neighborhoods into safe places to live. This guidebook tells how other people have cleaned up their neighborhoods. And it suggests ways you can clean up your neighborhood.

What this guidebook is all about.

This book describes things people have done to reduce alcohol and other drug abuse problems in their neighborhood. Every activity described here has been used safely and successfully by someone trying to make their neighborhood a better place to live. We have taken the best of all the ideas we have encountered and are passing them along to you so that you can learn from and build upon other people's experiences.

Problems neighborhoods face.

Some neighborhoods have bigger problems than other neighborhoods. In this guidebook we assume that your neighborhood faces very serious problems and we describe steps you can take to solve them. These steps have been tried by others and they have worked, even under the most difficult situation. If your neighborhood has less severe problems, you may be able to skip some of these steps, or you may make more rapid progress. The point is: whatever condition your neighborhood is in, you can make it better.

Neighbors who care.

Almost every successful neighborhood effort has been led by people who live there. Some neighborhoods received help from official services, while others accomplished great things with almost no outside assistance. The most important factor in successful neighborhoods has always been people who were willing to get out of their homes, to meet and talk with their neighborhoods, and to take leadership to clean up their neighborhood. The key to success is neighbors who care. If you care enough to start, this book can help you through the process of cleaning up your neighborhood.

Change is possible.

Neighborhoods that have been turned around have had some or all of the following problems:

- "open air" public drug dealing, including dealers who knowingly have offered drugs for sale to law enforcement officers;
- gang activities, frequent shootings and drug-related deaths;
- situations so dangerous law enforcement officers are reluctant to get out of their patrol cars without backup;
- parks, street corners and other areas controlled by gangs and/or drug dealers;
- open drug use, drinking and intoxication;
- prostitution and loitering;
- dangerous garbage such as hypodermic syringes, broken bottles and used condoms;
- buildings or homes completely covered by graffiti or so badly damaged they are uninhabitable.

Hopefully, you don't face these kinds of major problems. But even if you do, the steps and activities described in this guidebook will work in your neighborhood. In many neighborhoods, these problems have been confronted and solved through the combined efforts of neighbors, law enforcement officers, and other support services all working together toward a common goal: cleaning up the neighborhood.

How long will it take?

In the most difficult cases, persistent action has created major positive changes in about one year. That is, if you start today, some things will get better immediately and your neighborhood will be very different a year from today.

Fundamental Facts About Neighborhood Change

This guidebook is based on several important "fundamental facts" that will affect everything you do to clean up your neighborhood.

#1. The police cannot solve all the problems in your neighborhood.

The days when every problem could be fixed with one call to the police are gone. High rates of serious crimes in many cities and towns prevent the criminal justice system from investigating, prosecuting and resolving every "minor" problem. Even if officers wanted to respond to every call for assistance - and many wish they could - they have to concentrate on the worst cases. In places where law enforcement has to concentrate on serious and life-threatening problems, neighbors may have to tackle non-life-threatening problems on their own.

In any emergency call law enforcement for help. Most likely, an officer will respond to your call. However, if the officer cannot end the problem (no arrest is made; no one goes to jail), you may have to try a different approach. This guidebook describes many tactics neighbors can use - without endangering themselves and without breaching the peace - to prevent or confront the kinds of everyday problems that law enforcement officers may not be able to solve.

#2. Outside "experts" cannot solve all the problems in your neighborhood.

Unfortunately, there is no magic answer to solve your neighborhood's problems. There is no expert you can hire to come in, take over and fix things. Everything included in this guidebook came from people just like you who got tired of what was happening in their neighborhood and set out to change things. If there are any experts, they are people in other neighborhoods who learned things through trial and error and who, because they kept moving forward, now have safe and healthy neighborhoods. As you move forward you will become experts, too.

#3. Money cannot solve all the problems in your neighborhood.

It is possible to make major changes in your neighborhood without spending any money at all. You don't need money to get people involved, or to get neighbors to communicate with each other, or to get the police to respond to your calls, or to clean up a park, or to get rid of a crack house. What you need is desire, commitment and willingness to work toward an important goal. This guidebook is filled with very effective simple things you and your neighbors can do to clean up your neighborhood.

You also will need a telephone, a phone book, some envelopes, some stamps and maybe a typewriter, but these don't cost a lot of money.

#4. You don't have to risk your life to clean up your neighborhood.

It makes no sense to get injured or killed for the good of the neighborhood. No activity included in this book should breach the peace. If you ever become endangered in this process, back off, go home and call the police. Let them handle the dangerous work. Gangs can be deadly and drug dealers can kill. Let law enforcement handle them. You have plenty to do without taking on the bad guys. Do not endanger yourself. Live to enjoy a safe and healthy neighborhood.

#5. A handful of people can create a neighborhood full of change.

It takes only one person to get things started. Although it's exciting to have many people show up at a meeting, you don't need to recruit the entire neighborhood to get things done. In the beginning it is unrealistic to expect a big group, and it certainly is not necessary for change. Many successful efforts began with one person working alone and were finished by less than five committed people. Ask for help, but begin whenever you are ready. You don't need to wait for anyone.

What lies ahead.

In the sections that follow, we describe many different actions you can take to clean up your neighborhood. These suggestions are presented in steps, beginning with the simplest things you can do by yourself to start changing things right away, and ending with the most complicated things you can do over a long period of time to make permanent positive changes in your neighborhood. Although you can try whatever you like, we suggest you **Start Small**, focusing on the easy things first.

You are the best judge of what will or won't work. Try the activities that seem best to you. You also may need to change some of these ideas in order to make them work in your neighborhood. Do whatever you think is best for you and for your neighborhood. You control the process. These are only ideas to encourage you to keep moving forward.

SECTION ONE: GETTING STARTED

All activities described in this section - "Getting Started" - are actions you can take immediately, and by yourself if necessary, to begin reclaiming your neighborhood. Most of the time, people working together have more power and more influence and keep going longer than individuals working alone. Try to recruit other family members and neighbors to join your effort. However, one person can be successful in all the activities included in this section.

Activities described in Section One include the following:

1. Walk around your block every day.
2. Make a map of your neighborhood.
3. Pick up dangerous garbage.
4. Get acquainted with the police.
5. Communicate with absentee property owners and landlords.
6. Use the telephone to call for assistance.
7. Remove graffiti.
8. Remove abandoned cars.
9. Replace broken street and park lights.
10. Stop inappropriate use of your neighborhood park.
11. Interrupt automobile drug deals.
12. Stop drug problems on abandoned property.
13. Interrupt public and underage drinking.

All of these activities - things you can do to reduce drug and alcohol problems in your neighborhood - are described in Section One.

Copy This Book!

This guidebook is organized for easy photocopying. You have permission to make copies of any pages for handouts to others in your neighborhood. Sometimes it is easier for people to remember what they are doing when they have a handout describing the task.

#1: Walk around your block every day.

On the first day you decide to do something about your neighborhood, take a walk around the area. It is best to begin by walking up one side of your street, crossing, and walking back down the other. If you are concerned for your safety, stay within view of your own house. If you feel safe, walk farther in both directions or try walking around the block. The purpose of the walk is to:

- Check out the condition of the neighborhood and write down its problems;
- Talk to other neighbors about cleaning up the neighborhood; and
- Get to know your neighbors.

Safe times to walk the neighborhood.

In neighborhoods affected by open-market drug dealing or gang activity, it may be unsafe to walk around from noon until well past midnight when dealing and gang activity are at their most intense. However, dealers and gang members tend to sleep very late and the streets are relatively safe from 6:00 a.m. until about 11:00 a.m. You can walk the streets during those hours. Even in the most seriously affected neighborhoods, people go outside in the morning to work on their yards, or to clean up trash, or to go about their business. This "safe time" is your time. This is your time to walk around your neighborhood, visit with your neighbors and talk about what is going on, and what you can do to change it.

Study the neighborhood.

As you walk, study the neighborhood. Look at every house and every car. Look in yards, in gutters and in the bushes. Get to know every part of your neighborhood. It is helpful to take notes about what you see. Make a list of things you believe to be dangerous or a nuisance to the neighborhood. Broken glass, graffiti, trash, drug paraphernalia, abandoned cars, and damaged property are all problems that you should look for during your walk. If you find something especially unusual, take a photo of it. Take walks every day and keep a daily log of the neighborhood. Write down the date and what is going on so you can keep track of the changes that take place.

Talk with people.

Talk with people who are outside their homes. Introduce yourself to them and tell them you have decided to start re-claiming the neighborhood. Invite them to walk around the neighborhood with you. As people get acquainted with you, they will

become friendlier and may join you on your walk.

One step at a time.

This daily neighborhood walk is extremely important. This is the first step in taking back your neighborhood one bit at a time. Taking a daily walk is doing something - no matter that it is small in comparison to the damage being done at night. At first, you probably will walk by yourself. But you may soon be joined by someone else who is motivated by your first step. Plan to walk the neighborhood every day for as long as you live there. As your neighborhood changes, you will be able to extend the time periods during which you are safe to move about in the neighborhood.

Watching at night.

After noon and at night you can still observe what is going on in your neighborhood and enter information into your daily log. If, looking out your windows at night, you witness drug dealing, gang activity, prostitution, speeding cars, excessive foot traffic or loitering, write these down in your daily log. This information will be helpful for other activities described later in this guidebook.

Accomplishing the first two important tasks.

On the first morning when you walk the neighborhood you will accomplish the first task in taking back your neighborhood: you will have started the process of cleaning up the neighborhood. On the day when someone else joins you on your walk you will have accomplished a second important task in taking back your neighborhood: you will have recruited someone else to help.

#2: Make a map of your neighborhood.

What is your neighborhood?

One of the most important parts of a neighborhood effort is defining boundaries. Which homes, streets, schools, parks, businesses are you willing or able to include in your efforts? In general, it is best to **start small** in order to stay focused on a manageable set of tasks. The following questions may be helpful in defining your neighborhood.

- How big an area can you and your neighbors reasonably expect to change?
- Where do the problems occur? Are those areas part of the neighborhood?
- Are there any natural barriers that define your neighborhood (a freeway, a river, a large park, etc.)?
- Which homes, streets and facilities (schools, businesses, streets, parks, etc.) are in the neighborhood? Which are outside the neighborhood?
- Does your neighborhood already have a name and boundaries? Should you stick with these boundaries?

If you are uncertain about the boundaries of your neighborhood there are ways to select them. For example, the neighborhood might include everything within a ten minute walk of your house. Or, the neighborhood might include everything you can see from your front porch.

Set your own boundaries

You should set your own personal boundaries on your neighborhood in order to set your own goals for changing the neighborhood. Select an area that makes sense to you and that you are willing to work on. Your neighbors may select different boundaries and, later on, you can combine maps and move forward together. For now, select an area that is important to you and start working on it.

Draw a map

Make a map of all structures, streets, and spaces in your neighborhood. Draw your map on a standard size sheet of paper and make photocopies. Take a copy along on your daily walk and mark down where problems exist. Keep notes on the back of the map and file each day's map in a folder. Identify local problem "hot-spots" or places you hope to target. This way you can look back later and measure the progress you have made. Your map will help you keep focused.

#3: Pick up dangerous garbage.

Daily pickup.

Your neighborhood may contain many kinds of dangerous garbage. It is common to find used syringes, used condoms and broken bottles in the gutter, on the sidewalk, in the park or on the school ground. Not only is this garbage unsightly, children find these items and play with them, putting themselves at risk for serious injury. A very important task that one person can accomplish alone is a daily patrol of the area to remove dangerous garbage.

A bucket and a glove.

Bring a small bucket and a heavy leather glove with you on your daily walk through the neighborhood. Pick up the dangerous items you find and dump them in a trash can. You may want to concentrate on one specific area such as a children's play area in a park (the sandbox surrounding swings and slides may be filled with small bits of broken glass). Be careful to prevent injuring yourself.

Preventing life-threatening injuries.

Although an accomplishment like picking up garbage may seem small compared to the huge problems in your neighborhood, your clean-up efforts may prevent a life-threatening injury to a child in your neighborhood. You also may inspire other people to join in and help clean up the trash.

Large objects.

Ways to remove large dangerous objects (abandoned cars, large piles of trash, etc.) are described later in this guidebook.

Get Out Of Your House!!

Residents in safe neighborhoods spend a lot of time outside their homes. They feel safe walking, or working on something, or visiting, or just watching other people go by. In unsafe neighborhoods the only people outside may be gangsters, drug dealers and strangers. Whoever walks the streets controls the neighborhood.

Your presence on the streets is both a symptom of a healthy neighborhood and a cure for creating a healthy neighborhood. The more people in your neighborhood feel safe to go out of their houses, the safer the neighborhood will become.

If you can't be outside all day, start with a few morning hours at a time. As your neighborhood improves, the number of safe hours will grow. You will know you have accomplished something major when you and your neighbors can safely walk your

neighborhood in the evening.

#4: Get acquainted with the police.

Support from law enforcement is essential to success in reclaiming your neighborhood. Get acquainted with local officers. The better acquainted you are with local officers, the better you can tap into their remarkable resources to help clean up your neighborhood.

Introduce yourself to local law enforcement officers.

It is very acceptable and very effective to speak with uniformed officers in your neighborhood. Introduce yourself, and start talking about your efforts to reclaim the neighborhood. Be friendly and honest. Express your views and listen to theirs. Officers know that good relationships with people in neighborhoods make their job much easier and safer. They will respond positively to your friendly efforts.

Some neighborhoods have held special events and invited local officers to come and get acquainted with people in their neighborhood. Any steps you take to become familiar with local officers will be beneficial in your efforts to reclaim your neighborhood.

Learn about local enforcement programs.

There are many law enforcement programs available to your neighborhood. The most common services include:

- "911" Emergency Assistance;
- Community patrolling;
- Special Investigations - Gangs and Narcotics;
- Community Relations including Neighborhood Watch; and
- Prevention programs like Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) and Police Athletic League (PAL).

Look up the telephone number for law enforcement in the front section of your white pages telephone directory under "City Government - Police" if you live in an incorporated city, or "County Government - Sheriff" if you live outside an incorporated city. Call the community relations division, tell them what you are doing, and ask them to send an officer out to your neighborhood to describe all law enforcement services that are available to your neighborhood.

Limitations of traditional enforcement strategies.

In many communities, law enforcement officers patrol very large areas and must be prepared to respond to any problem at any time. During her or his shift, an officer might have to contend with a variety of crimes, accidents and emergencies, driving many miles from one problem to the next. This "general" approach to enforcement has several limitations.

First, when several emergencies occur at the same time, officers may have to respond to the most serious problem before responding to a less serious one. This is why officers may not respond immediately when you call about a suspicious car parked in front of your house; they may be responding to a robbery or a shooting somewhere else. Second, officers who have to respond all over town may not have time to get to know the people in the neighborhoods they serve. You may have noticed that the same officer never responds twice; you get a different officer every time you call and you have to explain things over and over again. This can be frustrating for you and for the officer.

Two law enforcement programs that are very helpful to neighborhood cleanup efforts are "Problem Oriented Policing" (POP) and "Community Oriented Policing" (COP). POP and COP are strategies to improve enforcement by focusing officers and resources on a specific problem or on a specific community.

POP and COP.

Problem Oriented Policing is an approach to law enforcement that assigns officers and resources to focus on a specific problem. For example, a Gang Task Force will focus only on the problem of gangs, and a Narcotics Unit will focus only on major drug problems. POP officers become very familiar with their specific problem and carry out in-depth investigations and major operations to stop the problem. They become experts in their field and may have very powerful impact. POP officers operate in many areas of the community and can see how the larger problems affect different neighborhoods. A POP program can be very effective in solving some of the major crime problems in your neighborhood.

Community Oriented Policing is an approach to law enforcement that assigns a small team of officers to work only in one specific community or neighborhood. COP officers patrol a relatively small area, such as a business district or a neighborhood. These officers - sometimes called "beat officers" - are assigned to the same area so they can become familiar with the people who live there and the

problems they face. Because they do not have to respond to calls from across town, they do not need patrol cars. COP officers often patrol on foot, talking with people and getting familiar with the problems of the community. When necessary COP officers can call for assistance from POP or other officers to target special problems (like gangs and drugs).

The combination of POP and COP can be extremely helpful in your efforts to reclaim your neighborhood. Find out if your local law enforcement has POP or COP programs. If POP and COP are available, work to get them into your neighborhood. If they are not available, encourage your local law enforcement to develop a Problem Oriented Policing program and a Community Oriented Policing program.

Create a partnership between your neighborhood and local law enforcement.

Many of the activities described in this guidebook involve neighborhoods and law enforcement officers working together. You will have greater success with law enforcement if you develop working relationships with them. Law enforcement cannot solve all your problems but they can be a very powerful partner.

Don't expect law enforcement to do everything for you - just the parts that you cannot accomplish yourselves. They are in your neighborhood to protect the public, to preserve the peace and to intervene in an emergency. Any other task that does not endanger the neighborhood or breach the peace is your responsibility. Let law enforcement know that you are serious and determined to clean up your neighborhood. Support their efforts and they will support yours.

A working partnership with law enforcement is not just doing what they say. You and your neighbors have the greatest stake in reclaiming your neighborhood and you have a right to help decide what law enforcement will do there.

#5. Communicate with absentee property owners and landlords.

Your rights as a neighbor.

As a resident of your neighborhood you have the right to peace and security. Your family has the right to come and go from your property without threat of violence. If your neighbors are disturbing you, you can call the police and ask them to intervene to stop the problem. Or you can contact the person who owns the property owner and ask them to help end the problem.

Absentee owners.

Some people who own property in your neighborhood may not live there. Investors often buy homes and rent them out. These "absentee" property owners may not know what is going on at their property. A very important task one person can accomplish is to locate neighborhood property owners, contact them by telephone or by mail and tell them what is going on in the neighborhood and on their property.

Drug problems on rented or vacant property.

Drug dealers often rent houses or apartments or use abandoned property to do their business. Dealers try to find property that is poorly managed or that is owned by people or organizations that do not control activities that take place there. The dealers know that if no one cares about the property, then they can conduct their drug business undisturbed.

Supportive owners.

Most absentee owners care about their investment in your neighborhood. As the quality of life improves in the neighborhood, the value of their property also will increase. The value of their property drops if it is being used for illegal activity. If you tell absentee owners about drug problems on their property, they may act immediately to end the problems. Landlords who monitor what happens on their property can be a powerful force in a neighborhood clean-up campaign.

Non-supportive owners.

Unfortunately, some property owners do not intervene to protect their property. Property owners fail to supervise their tenants for a variety of reasons:

- the owner may live out of town and not be aware of the problem;

- the property management company may not bother to monitor behavior;
- the property may be owned by corporations, trusts, or other legal entities that move property around on paper without ever knowing where or what the property is;
- the owner may be physically or financially unable to care for the property;
- the owner may know what is going on but be too fearful to intervene.

A non-supportive absentee property owner may be a problem, but you can motivate non-supportive owners to correct the problems on their property.

How to find an absentee property owner.

You can find out who owns the property by telephoning your county assessor's office and asking them who owns the property. Property ownership is public information and you have a right to know who owns what property. In many areas, the assessor's staff can tell you over the telephone who owns the property. At most, you may have to make a trip to the assessor's office.

How to call the county assessor.

The assessor is listed in the front of the white pages telephone book under "County Government". The telephone number may be listed as "Assessment-Ownership Information" or something similar. Dial the number. Often the line will be busy, so be prepared to hang up and dial again. Some callers have re-dialed as many as 20 or 30 times in a row in order to get through. It may take ten or fifteen minutes to get through, but immediately dial again if the number is busy. (Use the redial button on your phone, if you have one.)

When the line rings, and someone answers, tell them, "I want to find out who owns the property at...." Tell them the address of the property. The person answering the phone may be able to look up the address on a computer and tell you right then the name and address of the owner. Be prepared to write down the information. If you have several addresses, ask for all of them. Thank the person on the phone and hang up. It should be that simple. If they can't tell you the information over the phone, ask where the files are located and what times they are open. Go to the assessor's office. Staff there will help you look up the name of the owner.

How to communicate with an absentee property owner.

Once you get the name and address of the owner, try telephoning them. If they r

address is local, look them up in the telephone book. If the address is out of town, you may be able to get their telephone number from directory services and assistance (look in the very front page of your white pages telephone book to find help from directory assistance). If there is no telephone listing for the owner, write the owner a letter at the address you have. (Keep a copy of the letter.) Whether you contact them by phone or by letter, the purpose is the same: tell them what is going on at their property, and ask them to correct the problem.

Ask the owner to help.

Your first contact with the owner should be polite and you should clearly state your concerns. Tell the owner what is going on and ask them to help stop the problem. Although you may be angry with the owner, remember that she or he has the power to solve the problem easily. Approach the owner as a friend, and they may help you.

"Motivating" an absentee owner to intervene.

If the owner is not responsive to your request, you have considerable power to force them to comply. You can turn to several sources to help motivate the owner to correct the problem. These include:

- local law enforcement;
- local political representatives (supervisors, council members, etc.);
- the building inspector;
- the local District Attorney;
- the health department;
- the planning department; and
- the public works department.

All of these public agencies are listed in the "County Government" section of the white pages phone book. Call "Information" at any of these agencies, tell them what the problem is, and ask them to refer you to someone who can help. You may get transferred from person to person, but stay with it. Eventually you will get someone who can help.

Small Claims Court.

One of the most powerful resources you have is small claims court. You can sue a non-supportive property owner for allowing behavior to occur on their property

that causes you pain and suffering. In California, you can sue in small claims court for up to \$5,000 in damages. The small claims court process is discussed at the end of this guidebook.

Hopefully, the owner will intervene, stop the problem, and your neighborhood will immediately get better. If not, you have many other resources (besides the landlord) to help clean up the neighborhood. These other resources are described throughout this guidebook.

Getting help from the system.

Someone once said that people who work in a bureaucracy are divided into two groups: "No" people and "Yes" people. Most people only have the power to say "No;" few people have the power to say "Yes," and most of the "Yes" people are up near the top. To get help from the system, it may be necessary to work your way up past the "No" people until you get to a "Yes" person.

When you first make contact with a person in the bureaucracy, be clear and polite. Remember that they are people just like you who happen to work for a complicated organization. Be respectful, and ask them to help you. If you are lucky, they might be able to solve your problem.

If you are not satisfied with the "help" you are getting from someone in the bureaucracy, politely ask for the name and telephone number of the person's supervisor, and call the supervisor. When you reach the supervisor, make your request again. If you still don't get what you want, you can go up to the next supervisor, and so on. Be courteous and eventually you should reach someone with the power to help you.

Most people stop asking for help after talking to one or two "No" people. Some bureaucracies count on you to give up and leave them alone. They may try to convince you that what you want is impossible. Don't believe them. Keep going up the ladder. Usually, when you get to the top, you find people who are willing to listen, who are willing to help you, and who have the power to say "Yes."

Two key words to remember: **polite** and **persistent**.

#6: Use the telephone to call for assistance.

Your telephone - a powerful tool

Your telephone is a powerful tool for reclaiming your neighborhood. There are many public services available to help you clean up your neighborhood. All of these services can be reached by telephone.

Start your own telephone directory.

Turn to the front section of your white pages telephone directory and gather the phone numbers for the following agencies and services. Write them down and keep the phone list someplace (near the telephone) where you can find it easily. Some of these numbers will be listed under city or county government. Others you will have to track down through the departments that run them.

FOR ANY EMERGENCIES:

- "911" (If the emergency is not an immediate life threatening situation, you may not get immediate response, or you may be asked to call another number.)

NON-EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE:

- _____ Law Enforcement Community Relations
- _____ Law Enforcement Gang Task Forces / Narcotics Task Forces
- _____ City or County Community Relations
- _____ Public Health Department - Health Abatement
- _____ Fire Marshal
- _____ Planning Department - Building Inspection
- _____ Public Works
- _____ Parks and Recreation
- _____ Public Housing

- _____ School Office of Education - County and District

The system is not the problem.

The system is not the problem; people who distribute, use and abuse drugs and alcohol in your neighborhood are the problem. But the system may be standing between you and a solution. As you communicate with people in the system you will become familiar with who is responsible for what. If you develop friendly relationships with public officials and their staff they will become more accessible. Take the time to be friendly and get acquainted as you contact people in different public agencies. Learn how to work the system to get the support you need. You have the right to speak with any public official in your community. If you have a question or need help, call and ask.

Create a partnership with the system.

Success in reclaiming your neighborhood will depend on the partners you bring in to help. People who work for the police, the schools, social services, and health services want to fix the problems of the community but they know they cannot do it without your help. They know they need your help as a partner in solving neighborhood problems. Sometimes, however, partnerships may be one-sided: one or both partners want the other to help them do things **their** way. Sometimes system people only want neighborhood people to help the system; sometimes neighborhood people only want the system to help their neighborhood.

An effective partnership, works two ways: the system needs your help to solve its problems; and you need help from the system to solve your neighborhood's problems. In order for things to get better and stay better in your neighborhood, you and the system have to enter into a truly equal partnership.

Get help from the system.

Public agencies can help you solve many problems in your neighborhood. The system can help you with a variety of tasks including:

- Removing graffiti;
- Removing abandoned cars;
- Replacing street and park lights;
- Re-setting park sprinklers to drive out loiterers or drinkers;
- Installing traffic speed bumps and barriers; and
- Cleaning up or closing dangerous property.

These tasks are discussed below. You can begin all of these efforts by telephoning

a public agency in your area.

#7: Remove graffiti.

Sending a message to the neighborhood.

Gangs post graffiti to tell their enemies, "This is our turf. Stay out." Drug dealers use graffiti to advertise their business. Graffiti is a declaration of territorial ownership, and it is a message to the neighborhood: "We are taking over your neighborhood."

Graffiti can have a profound psychological effect on a neighborhood. It can demoralize people who live there and it can inspire lawlessness among gangsters, drug dealers and drug users. However, people in many neighborhoods have successfully fought back by removing graffiti as fast as the gangs can create it.

Sending a message to the gangs.

Residents in many neighborhoods aggressively seek out and remove graffiti, usually by painting over it. Removing graffiti silences the gang's declaration of ownership and it interrupts the drug dealer's advertisements in your neighborhood. Removing graffiti sends a message back to the gangs: "This is our neighborhood. We won't let you take it over."

Getting help to remove graffiti.

Many communities have organized teams that patrol for graffiti and paint over it. Call your local authorities (begin with law enforcement community relations) to ask for assistance. You may find an agency that can remove the graffiti for you.

Do-it-yourself.

Some communities provide free surplus paint for do-it-yourselfers who want to paint over graffiti in their neighborhoods. Removing graffiti yourself will require hard work, but the effects are worth it.

If you decide to remove graffiti yourself, take advantage of safe times in the mornings while gangsters and dealers are asleep. Usually you can work safely and undisturbed between sunrise and late morning. If you are challenged, stop and come back the next day to try again.

People in some neighborhoods patrol their local area early every morning, painting over graffiti left the night before. Constant anti-graffiti action can greatly improve neighborhood morale and it appears to have positive effects against the gangs.

#8: Remove abandoned cars.

Abandoned or derelict cars are an eyesore and a hazard. Children play on them , dealers sell around them, and users take drugs in them. One small but important action you can take to reclaim your neighborhood is to remove abandoned vehicles from the streets.

Call local law enforcement.

State and local laws and codes direct different law enforcement jurisdictions to deal with abandoned vehicles in different ways. Officers in some areas may ticket vehicles. Officers in other areas may have cars towed after a period of time on the street. Call your local law enforcement community relations department, tell them what you want to do and ask them for help.

Call city or county community relations.

Some cities and counties have their own abandoned vehicle removal programs . Call Community Relations and ask them to help remove abandoned cars on your street.

Call the state Highway Patrol.

Depending on where the vehicle is located, state law enforcement officers may be able to help. Their rules and regulations may be different from local law enforcement.

Abatement actions.

Laws and regulations for removing derelict vehicles from private property vary from area to area. You may find a public agency that will initiate an abatement action against a residence with too many derelict autos on it. Call around the system asking for assistance and explaining that you are trying to reclaim your neighborhood. You may have to make 15 or 20 calls, but don't give up. Eventually you will find someone to help get rid of the cars.

Not for do-it-yourselfers.

Do not attempt to remove an abandoned vehicle by yourself. You could be charged with auto theft!

#9: Replace broken street and park lights.

Under cover of darkness.

Gangsters and drug dealers may break or shoot out lights on streets or in parks so that they can do their business in the darkness where they are less easily seen. An important action you can take to interrupt gang and drug dealing activity in your neighborhood is to have street and park lights replaced.

Call for help with lights.

Several public agencies are responsible for maintaining lighting in public places. Park and recreation districts maintain lights in parks. Public works departments or city streets departments may be responsible for street lighting. School districts repair lights on school property, and private property managers can replace lights in parking lots, in apartment complexes or in some residential developments. Whoever owns the broken light is responsible for replacing it. Figure out who is responsible for maintaining the property, look them up in the telephone book and give them a call. (See #4 above, *Communicate with absentee property owners and landlords.*)

A little leverage.

Because of budget cutbacks and cost-saving measures, some agencies and organizations are not very quick to replace lights. You may have to persuade them that the safety and security of their property - and of the people who use the property - are at risk, due to the darkness and to the type of illegal activity that takes place there. Suggest to them that the inconvenience and expense of maintaining the lights is worthwhile. Point out the risk of negligence if they do not repair the problem - and if someone is injured there - now that you have informed them about it. Offer to be their eyes and ears in the area and help them control behavior to protect the property and the people who use it.

Callbacks are easy.

Usually, the same light gets broken again. Once you know who is responsible for replacing it, you can call that person directly and ask to have it replaced again.

As with all other efforts to get someone else to help reclaim your neighborhood, you may have to make many telephone calls. Your persistence will pay off. Be as polite and respectful as possible, but be firm in your insistence that the lights be

maintained. If you keep replacing the lights, eventually the gangsters and the dealers will go somewhere else.

#10: Stop inappropriate use of your neighborhood park.

Inappropriate behavior in your neighborhood park.

Neighborhood parks often are used inappropriately by drug dealers, gangsters and drug users. Or they may be used for public drinking and intoxication, making them undesirable for use by neighbors, families and children.

Call law enforcement for assistance.

Sometimes law enforcement officers can help control behavior in your neighborhood park. Officers can monitor or interrupt gang and drug dealer activities. Public drinking, however, is often classified as an infraction or misdemeanor, a relatively low level offense, and it may not receive priority enforcement.

People in some neighborhoods say officers have been unavailable or reluctant to respond to their repeated calls about inappropriate behavior in their park. They believe officers have not acted firmly enough to deter problem behavior. Some officers, on the other hand, note that serious felonies take priority over infractions and they are not always available to respond immediately to calls about inappropriate behavior.

Law enforcement may, or may not, be able to help you reclaim your neighborhood park from people who use it inappropriately. Nonetheless, if you object to what is taking place in your neighborhood park, call the police and ask for immediate assistance.

Sprinklers to control park use.

Many communities have used lawn sprinklers to control park use. By turning on the sprinklers at key times, people in the park can be moved around or moved out. You can contact the agency responsible for watering your neighborhood park and ask them to re-set sprinkler timers to interrupt inappropriate behavior in the park.

If public drinking is a problem during mid-morning hours, ask the parks people to set the sprinkler timer for mid-morning. If the problem is kids hanging out at night, get the sprinklers turned on at night.

In these days of water shortages, it may not be possible to have the sprinklers running two or three times a day, every day. But if you watch the area and determine what times are the most critical, you should be able to work out a

adequate time schedule for keeping the parks green and substance-free.

#11: Interrupt automobile drug deals.

Dealing drugs from automobiles.

Many drug deals happen in or around automobiles. Dealers use street corners, parking lots and public streets to sell their product. Drug buyers cruise around looking for "drive-thru" drug markets where they can make their buy and then speed away. Constant traffic, blocked streets, dangerous driving and noise are common problems in neighborhoods impacted by drugs and drug dealing.

A corner with a view.

Drug dealers who do business from their cars favor streets with easy access in and out. They often look for a corner next to a park that gives them a clear line of sight in all directions. This provides protection from ambush by law enforcement officers who might try to arrest them or by others who might try to rob them of their money or drugs. They can see anyone coming and they have multiple routes of escape. Anything you do to interfere with a drug dealer's escape route makes your neighborhood less attractive to drug dealers and buyers.

Speed bumps, barriers and "No Cruising" zones.

Neighborhoods in many areas have persuaded local officials to install speed bumps on streets or to block streets with physical barriers in order to discourage drug dealing. Some neighborhoods have been designated "No Cruising" zones where officers can stop, cite and search cars that pass through the area more than once. If a neighborhood can block access and escape routes, thereby increasing dealer and buyer risk, dealers may choose to go somewhere else.

Call local planning and streets departments.

Several local agencies will be involved in any effort to install speed bumps or barriers. To begin, call your city, county or law enforcement Community Relations office. Explain your concern and ask for their advice. Because streets have many uses, and because several agencies are involved, this project will take time. Be prepared to work on this task for several months.

Not all officials support speed bumps. Emergency fire equipment and ambulances have to go slow over speed bumps and drive around barriers. They may resist your efforts. Be prepared to make many telephone calls, to write many letters and to negotiate with people in several agencies in order to reach a solution. Hang in

there. Your neighborhood has a right to safe streets.

#12: Stop drug problems on abandoned property.

Dealing drugs from abandoned property.

Drug dealers look for places where they can conduct their affairs undisturbed. Drug users like to have a place where they can take drugs and loiter without being interrupted. Dealers and users often break into and take over abandoned buildings, unused property, boarded up homes, or other structures that provide the security they desire.

Fences, doorways, windows and holes in the wall.

Street dealers often sell drugs through holes in fences, doorways, windows and holes in abandoned structures that give them a measure of protection from being arrested or robbed. They are on one side of a barrier and everyone else is on the other side. This makes it harder for rivals to sneak up, attack them and rob them of their money or drugs. In order to get drugs out of your neighborhood, you can make it more difficult for dealers and buyers to use abandoned property.

Call property owners to stop the problem.

The person who owns the property being used for drug deals has a lot of power to interrupt the problem. Property owners can seal up a building or put up a good fence. They also can have structures torn down and removed. You may be able to identify the owner of the property, contact them and encourage them to secure or tear down structures on the property.

Call local officials to take abatement action.

You also may seek the assistance of local health and safety services to declare the property a nuisance in order to have it cleaned up. Several local agencies have power to take abatement action against derelict or abandoned property. Your local health department, fire marshal, planning department, or building inspector may intervene to stop dangerous behavior on property in your neighborhood. Contact these agencies by telephone, explain the problem and ask for their assistance.

#13: Interrupt public and underage drinking.

Public drinking.

Public consumption of alcohol is a constant problem in many neighborhoods. Intoxicated adults or drinking minors hang out in parks, vacant lots, street corners, or around local markets. People in neighborhoods have pursued two strategies to reduce public drinking: (1) get law enforcement to increase anti-drinking enforcement efforts, and (2) get local alcohol retailers to stop selling to inebriated persons and minors.

Call for law enforcement assistance.

Report inappropriate drinking in your neighborhood to law enforcement. Start by calling 911. However, if the problem is not an emergency, your call may receive low priority or you may be asked to call a non-emergency number. Hopefully, an officer will respond and stop the problem.

Law enforcement officers can intervene in several ways. They can make an arrest and remove the offender. They can write citations, confiscate alcoholic beverages, or instruct people to leave. Officers also can take action against alcohol retailers that violate sales laws. However, penalties against inappropriate drinking are relatively minor and officer intervention may only stop the problem temporarily. Offenders often return to the area and resume drinking after the officer leaves.

It may be necessary for you or your neighbors to become directly involved by asking a law enforcement officer to help you make a citizens arrest. You have the right to press charges yourself in order to have drinkers removed from the area. If you prefer not to get directly involved, there are other things you can do to solve the problem.

Communicate with local alcohol retailers.

Alcohol that is consumed in your neighborhood may have been purchased in your neighborhood. You can communicate with local alcohol retailers to ask them to stop selling to minors or to intoxicated persons.

Inappropriate alcohol sales.

Some retailers do not adequately train sales staff how to determine the age or the sobriety of the buyer. Or they do not adequately supervise clerks who sell alcohol when they should not. A few retailers succumb to the temptation to make a sale,

even when the buyer may be too young or too intoxicated to legally purchase alcohol. Whatever the reason, local merchants may be supplying alcohol to people who abuse it in your neighborhood.

Retailers risk losing their alcoholic beverage license when they make inappropriate sales. They may be liable for damages caused or injuries sustained by intoxicated persons to whom they sell alcohol. Often, retailers just need to improve staff training and supervision. In some cases, however, retailers will not change their sales practices unless public agencies and neighbors take assertive action to end inappropriate sales.

Motivating alcohol retailers to improve sales practices.

As a resident of the neighborhood, you can influence local retailers in several ways. First, suggest to the retailer that their business will be safer and will experience less violence, shoplifting, or vandalism when the neighborhood gets cleaned up. Ask them to help by not selling alcohol to minors or intoxicated customers.

If the retailer continues inappropriate alcohol sales, report your concerns to law enforcement, to other local public officials or to the news media and ask for help. You and your neighbors also can distribute handouts informing the community about the problem. You might even ask people not to shop at that market.

Finally, if the problem persists, you can sue the retailer in small claims court for personal damages you have sustained due to the retailer's negligent business practices of inappropriately selling alcohol in your neighborhood. When faced with a suit for many thousands of dollars, a retailer may be motivated to pass up the chance to make a few dollars on an inappropriate sale.

Local alcohol policy.

Alcohol sales and use are regulated by local policy. These policies can be changed by local elected officials. You may be able to influence your elected officials and get them to improve alcohol policies in your area. Contact your city council or county board of supervisors to learn more about local alcohol policy.

Whatever strategy you try, remember that persistence pays off. You may have to intervene many times in order to keep your neighborhood free of inappropriate drinking.

SECTION TWO: ORGANIZED ACTIVITY

Collective power.

The previous section of this guidebook, Section One, described 13 activities one person can do (alone if necessary) to reclaim their neighborhood. None of these 13 activities requires a group effort. However, when one person starts taking action in their neighborhood, other people will join in. This section talks about people working together to reclaim their neighborhood.

One of the basics of neighborhood action is, "The more, the better." If an activity works well with one person, it will work better with two, and even better with more. All of the activities described so far in this guidebook work well with one person, and they work better with more. The collective power of people working together is enormous. Like a snowball rolling down a mountain that grows to become an avalanche, once your neighborhood efforts get rolling, people will join in, the movement will get bigger and stronger and it will have more and more impact as it grows.

Getting organized.

People often ask, "How do you start an organization?" The simple answer for neighborhood projects often is, The organization starts itself. Once you start working on a worthy project, people around will join in. Starting an organization is nothing more than (1) starting something by yourself, (2) talking with others about what you are doing, and (3) inviting them to do something, too.

Organized activity.

Organized activity is several people working together to accomplish the same goal. They can be doing the same thing - walking around the block and cleaning up dangerous garbage together, for example. Or they can be doing different things that combine to accomplish the goal - one person walks around the neighborhood while another cleans up dangerous garbage. Organized activity means that people are communicating, they share the same goal, and they are all doing something to achieve that goal.

As you go through the organized activities described in this section of the guidebook you will discover that they are very similar to one-person activities described earlier. You also will discover that the transition from working by yourself to working with your neighbors is easy.

Organized activities for your neighborhood.

Activities described in *Section Two - Organized Activity* include the following:

14. Start a neighborhood trash clean-up campaign.
15. Start (or join) a local Neighborhood Watch.
16. Start a Neighborhood Patrol.
17. Start a Neighborhood Safety Committee.
18. Have neighborhood parties and celebrations.
19. Develop a neighborhood support system.
20. Create a Drug Free Zone in your neighborhood.

Just Say Yes!

Getting people to work together is easy, if you let them do what they want to do. People have their own ideas and their own goals and their own ways of doing things. Effective neighborhood organizations (1) encourage participants to find a task that is most important to them, (2) help participants take action, and (3) keep participants talking with each other about what they are doing.

If someone in your neighborhood asks to join you in the effort to reclaim the neighborhood, just say "Yes." Invite them to pick an activity that they believe in and encourage them to start. You can do one activity together, or you can do different activities that contribute toward solving neighborhood problems. The main point is, **everyone gets to do what they want**. The role of the organizer is not to control what people do; the role of the organizer is to motivate people to do something - anything - for the betterment of the neighborhood.

If your neighbors have ideas about how to reclaim the neighborhood, encourage them to start taking action right now. If you like their idea, and if they want you to help, join in and participate. If you don't like their idea, or if you don't want to help, encourage them to go ahead without you. If you like someone's idea, support it. If you don't like someone's idea, find something else you like and do that. The most important role of an effective neighborhood organizer is to say "yes" to anyone who wants to help.

#14: Start a neighborhood trash clean-up campaign.

The physical and psychological impact of trash.

Trash is a physical danger and a psychological barrier to the health and well-being of the neighborhood. Children are vulnerable to injury from dangerous garbage. Fire danger and health hazards increase when trash accumulates. And trash strewn around a neighborhood lowers property values and demoralizes the people who have to look at it day after day. One very helpful organized activity that you can do in your neighborhood is a trash clean-up campaign.

Many neighbors picking up garbage together.

A basic neighborhood clean-up campaign is easy to organize. It's nothing more than many individuals picking up dangerous garbage (Activity #3) all at the same time. An anti-trash campaign is a good way to organize people for their first neighborhood group effort. The steps are easy:

1. Select a safe short time like 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on Saturday morning.
2. Focus on a modest-sized area, such as one street or a small park.
3. One to two weeks before the event, distribute flyers and invitations (hand-written or typed, then photocopied) to people around the neighborhood.
4. Ask people to bring a bucket or a garbage can, heavy gloves, and any tools they wish to use, such as a rake, broom, shovel, etc.
5. When people arrive to work, ask them to choose a small section of the targeted street or park, and clean it up. They can dump the trash into a public trash container or take it home and put it in their own garbage can.

Leadership is easy.

The project requires little leadership - people divide themselves up, select their own task, and get the job done with no supervision. It costs nothing more than a few dozen photocopies of the flyer, and the time to make and distribute them.

The pay-off is immediate: neighbors can see the results of their labor and they have a chance to get outside and socialize with each other. You can also ask people to talk among themselves about other ways to reclaim the neighborhood.

Two times makes it a campaign.

Of course someone will trash the area again, so plan to have these clean-ups two or three times a month. That makes it a "campaign." If you start with three people

the first time, there will be five the next and fifteen the time after that.

Neighborhood trash wars.

Often, when a gang moves into a neighborhood they will rent a house or an apartment and immediately destroy the place. They may break furniture, or knock holes in walls and doors, then throw their junk into the front yard. Although this looks like senseless destruction of property, it may be a carefully calculated strategy to frighten neighbors and test their resolve.

If a gang trashes a piece of property and no one challenges them, they assume they can operate freely in the neighborhood. If, on the other hand, the neighborhood challenges the gang and cleans up the trash, the gangs and dealers may move on to another neighborhood that is easier to control. In some neighborhoods, gangs and residents have gone through days or weeks of trashing and cleaning up and trashing and cleaning up until the gangs move on to another neighborhood.

Escalate the trash campaign into full-blown neighborhood trash warfare.

After you and your neighbors get organized, you may choose to increase your anti-trash efforts to challenge the dealers and the gangs head-on. People in many neighborhoods have organized themselves - with the support of law enforcement, the fire marshal, public health inspectors, and local planning and public works departments - to wage all-out trash warfare against the gangs.

With back-up from local law enforcement and other public service agencies, you and your neighbors can take back houses, apartments, parks, and vacant property from the gangs and drug dealers. The key to mobilizing public services is to demonstrate your neighborhood's resolve to kick out and keep out the dealers and the gangs. If local services become convinced that you and your neighbors are serious, they will help you.

Start simply and re-claim your neighborhood one piece at a time.

It all starts with you picking up dangerous garbage alone. Then someone else joins in. Soon you and your neighbors have a two-hour trash clean-up on a Saturday morning. You follow this with a few more people on a few more Saturdays, and target several different sites. As you build your neighborhood organization you will gain the respect and help of local service providers, especially law enforcement. Once you and your neighbors get organized, you can bring in law enforcement and the building inspector to do the dangerous work. With their support, and over time, you can get rid of even the toughest most dangerous gangsters. People in other neighborhoods have done it. You can too.

#15: Start (or join) a local Neighborhood Watch.

A seasoned tool for neighborhood security.

The Neighborhood Watch program has been around for over a decade, offering a powerful means for neighbors to defend their families and their property. The major activity of Neighborhood Watch is to teach people basic security to protect their homes from outside intruders. Training focuses on preventing neighborhood crimes through (1) implementing security measures, (2) vigilance about strangers in the neighborhood, and (3) calling law enforcement to report crimes or suspicious behavior. Many training materials and support services are available at no charge through local law enforcement to any groups that would like to start a Neighborhood Watch group.

Two important limitations of Neighborhood Watch.

As effective as the Neighborhood Watch movement has been in improving neighborhood and home security, the programs have several limitations when it comes to getting rid of gangs and drug dealers. First, Neighborhood Watch focuses on defensive action against intruders, rather than offensive action to get problems out of the neighborhood. Participants are trained how to keep problems out, but if major problems are there already, the program offers few means to get them out and reclaim the neighborhood. The second limitation of Neighborhood Watch is that neighbors are trained to call law enforcement and wait for them to correct the problem. As we have discussed earlier, law enforcement cannot solve all the problems you face in your neighborhood.

Watching and calling law enforcement are important **parts** of a neighborhood project, but they cannot solve every problem. As we have mentioned many times in this guidebook, no one can clean up your neighborhood for you. You and your neighbors have to take responsibility for leading the effort, with assistance from law enforcement and many other services.

Getting the most out of Neighborhood Watch.

Neighborhood Watch is very useful for three things: (1) getting neighbors to work together, (2) developing close linkages with local law enforcement, and (3) improving vigilance and home safety in the neighborhood. If you make Neighborhood Watch a key part of your efforts, it can be an important asset as you work to reclaim your neighborhood. Telephone your local law enforcement

community relations officer and ask about Neighborhood Watch.

Neighborhood meetings.

Sooner or later, people in your neighborhood will want to have a meeting to discuss efforts to reclaim the neighborhood. Meetings are easy, if you follow a few basic steps.

Have a main topic or purpose for the meeting.

Try to limit the meeting to one major problem. Example meeting topics include:

- Cleaning up the local school playground;
- Organizing a Neighborhood Watch;
- Stopping drug activity at a particular house; or
- Organizing a Saturday morning celebration at the local park.

If people want to talk about two major problems, schedule two different meetings.

Stay on the topic.

The role of the leader is to keep people focused on the topic. If the conversation drifts off to something else, raise your hand and say, "This is getting a little off track. Let's get back to the subject of" People who take the time to go to a meeting will help make the meeting work. They have something to say and they can take care of themselves. They do, however, expect some leadership to keep things on track. If another major issue comes up at the meeting, schedule another meeting to discuss it. Limit meetings to one major topic at a time.

Start and end on time.

Start and end the meeting on time so that people can fit it into their busy schedules. The best length for a meeting is from 45 minutes to an hour. If you can't cover a topic in an hour, schedule a second meeting. Don't wait for "so-and-so" to show up. Start on time and "so-and-so" will probably be on time for the next meeting.

Start the meeting with talk; end it with action.

Divide the meeting into the following four sections of 10 to 15 minutes each.

1. Discuss the problem. Talk about what is happening.
2. Discuss how people feel about it. Let everyone speak.
3. Discuss what people want the situation to be like. Set realistic goals.
4. Identify specific tasks to accomplish the goals. Ask everyone to accept a task.

Assign specific tasks.

Meetings are not just for talking. If someone comes to the meeting to discuss a problem, they must be willing to do something to solve it. Assign specific tasks for each participant to do by a specific deadline. Have participants exchange telephone numbers before the meeting is over. Suggest that, if someone has difficulty completing their assigned task, they can call someone else in the group to ask for help.

Neighborhood meetings are easy to lead if you:

- Have one clear topic;
- Keep people on the topic;
- Keep the meeting short and on-time; and
- Expect participants to take action, not just come and talk.

#16: Start a Neighborhood Patrol.

Mobile neighborhood watchers.

People in some areas have formed neighborhood patrols to watch their neighborhood from private vehicles equipped with two-way citizen's band radios or car phones. Their goal is to monitor activities in their neighborhood and report suspicious behavior to law enforcement.

Neighbors coordinate their patrols with local law enforcement officers who monitor the CB channels, respond to citizen patroller calls for assistance, and provide limited training and technical assistance. Law enforcement agencies generally support trained neighborhood patrols and may assign staff to work directly with the patrol group.

Non-confrontational observers.

The neighborhood patrol keeps track of who is out in the neighborhood and monitors what they are doing. Patrollers never leave their cars and they never carry weapons. They are trained to avoid verbal confrontations and dangerous situations. The role of the neighborhood patrol is not to confront - it is to monitor and report. Patrols maintain close contact with law enforcement officers who respond to patrol calls for assistance. The partnership between the patrol and law enforcement officers ensures quick and effective responses.

The effects of neighborhood patrols.

When patrollers are well-trained, well-organized and working together with law enforcement, they can interrupt neighborhood crime. Neighborhood patrols have been very effective in reducing vandalism, graffiti, thefts, burglaries and assaults. The patrols also send a clear message to gangsters, drug dealers and drug buyers that someone is watching their activities. Persistent neighborhood patrolling is an effective way to move gangs and drugs out of the neighborhood.

Setting up a neighborhood patrol.

If you and your neighbors are interested in starting a neighborhood patrol, contact your local law enforcement community services division, tell them what you want to do, and ask for their assistance. An important point to remember: a neighborhood patrol must have direct participation and support from law enforcement. The patroller watches; the officer intervenes. A partnership between

the neighborhood and law enforcement is essential to success.

#17: Start a Neighborhood Safety Committee.

Safety and security for your most vulnerable neighbors.

Children and senior citizens are easy targets for abuse. Kids may be in danger on their way to and from school and at other times when they are out in the neighborhood. Some students are vulnerable to assault and robbery by peers who take their money or clothing. Many senior citizens feel like prisoners trapped in their own homes, afraid to venture out on the street to conduct their everyday affairs. One very important activity in an effort to reclaim your neighborhood may be to create a neighborhood safety committee that provides escort services to young and older people.

Neighborhood escorts.

A small group of two or three parents or young adults can form an escort program to get students to and from school. The escort group sets up a walking route - like a bus route, only much shorter - and walks the route to and from school picking up or dropping off young people on the way. Everyone walks together in a group.

Senior citizen escort groups can be developed and led by adults who are in the neighborhood during the day. Again, a regular schedule can be set up to take people to and from local markets, public transportation and other places. In seriously affected neighborhoods, outside escorts can be supported by watchers inside houses at checkpoints along the way who can call law enforcement if the group encounters a problem. Escort groups do two things: (1) they provide safety and security to vulnerable individuals, and (2) they give neighbors something important to do to regain control of their neighborhood.

Develop a neighborhood safety plan.

When people get together to talk about safety and security, the neighborhood usually gets safer. Invite several of your neighbors to a meeting to discuss neighborhood safety. At the meeting talk about safety problems in the neighborhood and identify ways to solve them. Develop a neighborhood safety plan that includes law enforcement and neighbors taking action together.

The best neighborhood safety efforts are based on a neighborhood/law enforcement partnership. Neighbors do the basic work with training and emergency assistance from law enforcement. Phone your local law enforcement community relations division, tell them what you want to do, and ask them for assistance. They will

help as you take responsibility for improving safety in your neighborhood.

Using small claims court to enforce neighborhood safety

Small claims court is a very powerful tool you can use to motivate landlords to control behavior on their property, or to compel alcohol retailers to obey alcohol sales laws. Small claims court is a simple way to get your day in court without paying lawyers and without waiting years to make your case. Usually, you can get into court within a few weeks of filing. Fees should total under \$10.

Using small claims court.

Numerous books are available describing how to sue in small claims court. Every county has someone assigned to train you how to use small claims court and to train you how to assemble your case. Rather than go through all the details, this handbook highlights basic issues that may help you decide whether or not you want to resolve your problem in small claims court. If you decide to use small claims court, telephone your county courthouse and ask for information about the process. You also may get assistance from local law enforcement community relations, your county library, or a local legal assistance center.

Negligent landlords

In brief, you can use small claims court to sue a property owner for personal damages you sustained because the property owner failed to remedy an unacceptable situation on their property. You do not have to prove that a crime was committed. You only prove that:

- a problem existed,
- you asked the landlord to resolve the problem,
- the landlord did not resolve the problem,
- you experienced personal injury or distress due to the un-resolved problem.

In California, you can sue in small claims court up to two times per year, for a total of \$5,000 in damages. Each member of your family can sue, and you can sue together with your neighbors for up to \$5,000 in damages per person. Some neighborhoods have successfully sued negligent landlords in "mini-class action lawsuits" using small claims court and have, together, been awarded judgements in excess of \$50,000. Because the suit is against someone who owns property, you can take a lien against the property as a means for collecting your award. Small claims court is an effective tool because, if you win the case, you and your neighbors could have the power to seize the property or force its sale.

Suing negligent alcohol retailers in small claims court.

If a local merchant sells alcohol inappropriately, and if this leads to distress in your neighborhood, you can sue the merchant in small claims court. As with negligent landlords, the case centers on your ability to prove that:

- the retailer inappropriately sold alcohol to minors or intoxicated persons,
- the minors or intoxicated persons created a disturbance in your neighborhood,
- you asked the merchant not to sell alcohol inappropriately,
- the merchant did not remedy the problem, and
- you experienced personal injury or distress due to the merchant's negligence.

Through creative use of small claims court, people in many neighborhoods are developing powerful and effective strategies that may help you reclaim your neighborhood.

#18: Have neighborhood parties and celebrations.

Who controls the streets?

One of the easiest ways to tell if a neighborhood is safe or not is to see who goes outside. Do neighborhood residents walk, work on their yards or spend time outside their homes in the afternoon or evening? Or do roving groups prowl the streets while residents bar themselves inside their homes?

Earlier in this guidebook we suggested that even the most seriously affected neighborhoods are relatively safe between sunrise and noon while the gangs and dealers are sleeping. We also have suggested that neighbors working to reclaim their neighborhood from the gangs and the dealers can gradually extend the safe hours in their neighborhood. Organized trash clean-up campaigns are one way to re-occupy your neighborhood by having people work together outside. You also can get people in your neighborhood outside to have fun together in safety as a strategy to take back your neighborhood.

Special neighborhood events.

You can re-occupy your neighborhood by scheduling special drug-free and alcohol-free events to get neighbors outside their homes in safety. Some special events that you and your neighbors might try include:

Sports celebrations and family recreation day. If your neighborhood has a park or school playground, schedule a Saturday morning for team sports events and family fun events. Some events may be competitive (i.e., football, soccer, baseball, etc.). Others may be non-competitive fun for all ages (i.e., volleyball, arts and crafts, board games, etc.).

Arts and crafts fairs. Invite local people to display, demonstrate and sell their hobbies, skills and wares. These are especially well-attended in fall, just before the holidays, and in spring.

Neighborhood flea markets or garage sales. Ask people to bring out their stuff and sell it. If people are afraid to hold a garage sale on their own, they may be willing to do it in a large, safe group of neighbors.

Food day - with special cooking from family or cultural recipes. Offer a variety of themes (i.e., regional or ethnic cooking, cooking styles, candy, etc.). Invite neighbors to display their skills and specialties.

Plays and pageants. Some neighborhoods have annual plays with local talent or with professional companies. This is an excellent way to encourage multi-cultural displays that let neighbors from different parts of the world celebrate their culture and educate their neighbors.

Music festivals. Invite local talent or professional musicians to perform.

Technical requirements.

You may need a use permit in order to hold your neighborhood celebration. Telephone your city or county community services department, tell them what you want to do, and ask them for assistance. If you let enough people know what you are doing, you probably will get help from local organizations, law enforcement community relations, parks and recreation, the local school and nearby businesses.

If your neighborhood is seriously affected by gangs and drugs, schedule the event for 9:00 am to noon on Saturday or Sunday. If you feel relatively safe, schedule something for the afternoon. Take advantage of your partnership with local law enforcement and ask them to give your event extra security and support. They may be able to coordinate their patrols to monitor your special event.

Alcohol and drug-free events.

Please remember: to make these events as safe as possible, keep them free of alcohol. Let people know in advance about the no-alcohol policy, and post signs throughout the area. Be prepared to ask people politely to put away or pour out alcoholic beverages and not to drink at the event.

Start slowly and the momentum will build.

Although it might seem impossible today to put together a special event in your neighborhood, things will be very different a year from now. After you get started on your own, and after other neighbors join you to take back your neighborhood, your organizational skills will grow. People in many neighborhoods have discovered that the momentum required for a neighborhood celebration gradually builds in their neighborhood until events like these almost organize themselves. Start out one step at a time. Eventually, what seemed impossible for your neighborhood can become remarkably easy and lots of fun.

#19: Create a Drug Free Zone in your neighborhood

Neighborhood coalitions organized against drugs and gangs.

People in neighborhoods across the country are creating drug-free zones (DFZs) as an organized effort to tell drug dealers and gangs, "We claim this territory to be drug-free and under our control, and we have law enforcement and other public and private services on our side to back us up."

A DFZ is any area of the neighborhood - a park, a school, a group of streets, a multi-family housing complex, or any specific place - where drug trafficking, drug use and alcohol abuse will not be tolerated. Neighbors create DFZs: (1) to concentrate neighborhood action against drugs and gangs within a specific area, (2) to authorize increased law enforcement and increased sentences for offenders who operate within the zone, and (3) to attract support services needed to keep drugs and gangs out of the zone permanently once they have been removed.

A DFZ is created and maintained through a coalition that includes residents, public service providers, law enforcement officers and prosecutors, school staff and administrators, and government officials. Each member of the coalition provides part of the services necessary to permanently end the problem.

Which comes first, the coalition or the drug-free zone?

Some neighborhoods, over a lengthy period of time, have organized neighbors, local officials and law enforcement into a coalition, and then declared a drug-free zone after their coalition was in place. Other neighborhoods began their campaign by creating a drug-free zone first and then organized a coalition to reinforce the zone. Whether a drug-free zone is a starting point or a goal toward which you and your neighbors work depends on how easy it will be to organize neighbors, service providers and law enforcement to create and sustain a zone that is truly drug-free. We encourage you to take any approach that will work in your neighborhood.

The advantages of a drug-free zone.

By declaring a drug-free zone, your neighborhood may be able to take advantage of special laws and services that increase your power to end drug problems in your area. Several advantages include:

- Enforcement agreements and criminal justice enhancements. Law

enforcement officers may concentrate their efforts inside a DFZ , and persons convicted of drug offenses committed in a DFZ may face increased penalties and longer sentences.

- Special access to services. Persons seeking drug abuse services may have speedier access, if they live in or near a DFZ.
- "Weed and Seed" programs. Weed and seed is an approach to cleaning up selected areas that attempts to "weed out" problems through increased law enforcement, then "seeds in" programs and services designed to keep drugs from coming back into the area. Weed and seed can be a strong part of a drug-free zone project.
- An area to focus neighborhood action. Often a DFZ gives local people a specific place to concentrate their efforts, and provides a solid base for organizing other activities against drugs and gangs. By creating a DFZ project, you and your neighbors can also attract other people to join in.

Existing drug-free zones.

Under existing law, all the area within 1,000 feet of a school is a drug-free zone. Anyone caught selling or using drugs within that area is subject to increased criminal prosecution. If there is a school in your neighborhood, then you already have a DFZ and you should think about ways to take advantage of it.

Different levels of organization.

The simplest type of DFZ is created when people in a neighborhood volunteer to target a specific area, to post signs or advertise that area as a DFZ, and work together to end substance abuse-related problems in that area. The next level of organization is to get local officials - political, service, and law enforcement - to recognize the DFZ as an official project and provide special support services to the project. The most formal DFZ projects are funded through government or private grants to hire staff who deliver special programs that create permanent changes in the area.

Whether or not your neighborhood chooses to create a volunteer, official or funded drug-free zone, the advantages of clearly declaring your own drug-free territory may be important in your efforts to reclaim your neighborhood. A solid drug-free zone can be an important goal to help organize resources that will improve the quality of life in your neighborhood.

#20: Develop a neighborhood support system.

Meeting a variety of neighborhood needs.

In many neighborhoods people need special help from time to time. As you and your neighbors move forward to reclaim your neighborhood, you will identify many different needs and you will acquire many very special skills to get things done. People will begin to look to you for leadership and they will ask you for help with personal and family problems. In some cases, you will be able to refer them to services available through the city or county. But you and your neighbors will also be asked to help people with problems the system is not able to address, particularly now that so many services are being cut back. As people in your neighborhood get organized, think about developing a basic neighborhood support system to address the everyday crises that people experience.

No license required.

A remarkable number of community service organizations train volunteers to help people in times of need. Many different types of assistance - from help filling out forms to emergency crisis intervention - are delivered almost entirely by community volunteers. If other organizations can deliver these services, people in your neighborhood can, too. You don't need a college diploma or a license to help people get through hard times. All you need is people who care enough to get training and who are willing to make their knowledge and skills available to their neighbors.

Special helpers in your neighborhood.

We already have described many different kinds of things neighborhood people can do to help each other improve their neighborhood. These tasks, along with a few others, are listed here to stimulate your thinking about ways you and your neighbors can put together many different activities into a neighborhood support system.

Neighborhood watchers. People at home during the day can monitor and record incidents that occur during the day (traffic, drug dealing, fights, etc.). These people can keep track of what is going on and can usually identify small problems before they become big. Watchers may be a good early warning system to identify and/or prevent serious neighborhood problems.

Neighborhood escorts. A team of escorts can be assembled to chaper on outdoor activities, to help people get from one place to another, and to look out for people who are especially vulnerable to dangers in the neighborhood. Escorts learn a lot about the neighborhood and often can intervene early when need y people are getting close to a crisis.

Home visitors. Once neighbors start talking with each other, they invite each other over to visit. Some people are very skilled at talking and listening and making sure their neighbors are okay. Home visitors are especially important to people who live alone or who have difficulty getting outside.

System experts. One of the first activities described in this guidebook is, "Use the telephone to call for assistance" (Activity #5). Neighbors who make calls to get help for their neighborhood become very skilled at "working the system". This ability to get past barriers can be extremely valuable to people who are having difficulty getting help from the system. Several people in your neighborhood probably will become experts at getting access to the system. They are valuable resources when other neighbors need help.

Liaison with law enforcement. As your neighborhood develops partnerships with law enforcement, some of you will become friends with officers and staff throughout the criminal justice system. These contacts can be very important when special crises occur in the neighborhood. Neighborhood- law enforcement liaison people can provide important support, advice and communication to help resolve family emergencies and to call for appropriate law enforcement support.

Clean up crews. One of your most important resources will be neighbors you can count on to respond immediately to graffiti, trash, vandalism or other types of property damage. Sometimes a neighbor's home may need emergency repair. A good clean-up and emergency repair crew in the neighborhood can be an essential part of a neighborhood support system.

Retired professionals. Some of your neighbors may have retired from very successful careers and may be willing to contribute their knowledge as neighborhood consultants. Retired plumbers, electricians and carpenters can help neighbors with emergency home repairs or teach others basic trade skills. Retired educators can give academic and career advice. Retired business people can share their financial or employment expertise with people trying to get into the job market or with families experiencing financial difficulties. Sometimes

people enjoy having a chance to share their skills and expertise as part of a neighborhood service system.

Get training from your local Red Cross and other volunteer organizations.

If someone in your neighborhood would like to acquire a special skill, they can get training to perform special neighborhood support tasks. An incredible array of volunteer training programs are available in your community. Send people from your neighborhood to these training programs and use their skills to serve people in your own neighborhood. Some examples of important skills that can be learned for free in most communities include:

- Suicide crisis intervention;
- CPR training;
- Rape crisis counseling;
- Substance abuse counseling;
- Domestic violence counseling;
- English as a second language (ESL) tutoring;
- School tutoring;
- Library skills;
- Reading and literacy tutoring; and
- Computer literacy.

Talk with your neighbors about the many different types of knowledge and special skills they have and set up opportunities for them to share their skills with people from your neighborhood who may need assistance from time to time.

Food and clothes closets.

Sometimes late in the month families run low on cash and may have trouble meeting their basic needs. This cash-flow crisis is becoming more common as people from all walks of life and in all kinds of neighborhoods are losing their employment. Some neighborhoods have created food, clothing and furniture "closets" to help their neighbors get through cash crises. Instead of donating items to charities, they make their contributions to a neighborhood project that serves people in their own neighborhood. Not only do these neighborhood support services help people out, they prove to people having hard times that someone really cares about their well-being.

Adopt extended families.

In many neighborhoods, one home may be occupied by someone who stays in the house all day with little social contact, while a home just down the street is

occupied by a single parent who cannot find adequate childcare. In some cases, families have worked out ways to help each other out by exchanging childcare for other family services. As neighbors break their isolation from each other, friendships develop and people get close to one another. There may be many potential "family members" in your neighborhood who are willing to help each other meet basic family needs. A neighborhood can become a kind of extended family with people watching out for each other. Some neighborhoods have block grandparents who know everyone's children, who know who belongs to which family, and who are willing to monitor behavior. People watching out for each other can prevent many different kinds of neighborhood problems.

A shift of services to the neighborhood.

By the time people in your neighborhood reach the point of coordinating their activities into a neighborhood support system, you will have attained a significant level of control over your neighborhood. As we have mentioned earlier in this guidebook, taking back your neighborhood **and keeping it** is a permanent project. You will have to work on your neighborhood for as long as you live there. But by the time you reach this point, you will be able to operate successfully in partnership with - rather than dependent on - the formal service system.

Relearning community - how to be a neighbor.

People in many neighborhoods stopped being "neighborly" long ago. Fear, isolation and the dangers of going outside the house have interrupted opportunities people used to have to get to know and trust their neighbors. We may know the people next door, but how often do we communicate with other families in our neighborhood? Many of us have not had a chance to be neighbors.

In some ways, this guidebook is intended to re-teach people how to be neighbors in the best sense of the word. All the activities described here have the indirect effect of improving the way people communicate, support, and share their lives in common with the people who live next door or across the street. As people do the things described here, they have a chance to become neighbors in ways that may not have been possible for a long time in their community.

This guidebook assumes that people in your neighborhood care enough about each other to get together and communicate. This book assumes that communication is better than isolation and that living next door to friends is better than living next door to strangers. And it assumes that people from very different backgrounds and from many parts of the world can all get along in the same neighborhood, with each person and each family contributing to the safety and security of everyone else who lives nearby. If these assumptions are true, then you and your neighbors will be able to create a kind of

community that may have been missing in your neighborhood for a long time.

CONCLUSION

Our purpose in writing this guidebook has been to describe some of the most effective activities people have used to reduce substance abuse-related problems in their neighborhoods. All of the activities included here have been used safely and successfully by people working to re-claim their neighborhoods. We are convinced that you can take advantage of other people's experiences and can use their techniques to re-claim your own neighborhood.

The opportunities are unlimited.

The activities described here are not the only things you can do, nor is it necessary that you do everything exactly as we have described. These are ideas and suggestions that we hope will help you as you take control of your neighborhood. Be creative and experiment with these and any other ideas you might have. Please feel free to contact us to tell us about your experiences and your successes re-claiming your neighborhood.

We wish you the very best of luck as you take back your neighborhood!

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